United Nations A/CONF.192/2006/RC/2

General Assembly

Distr.: General
20 June 2006

Original: English

Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference to Review Progress made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects
New York, 26 June-7 July 2006

Letter dated 16 June 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the secretariat of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

I have the honour to call your attention to the enclosed Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development (see annex). Switzerland and the United Nations Development Programme held a ministerial summit on "Armed Violence and Development" on 7 June 2006 in Geneva. The summit was a success, as evidenced by the support that the 42 participating countries gave to the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. The declaration was adopted at the summit's conclusion (for further information, visit the summit website www.eda.admin.ch/eda/g/home/foreign/humsec/smallarms.html).

I would like to inform you that Switzerland will present the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development to the review conference on behalf of all States that have already adopted it. In order to ensure continuity between the recently held Geneva ministerial summit on "Armed Violence and Development" and the review conference, it would be highly appreciated if the Geneva Declaration could be distributed as a document of the conference.

(*Signed*) Peter **Maurer**

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Annex to the letter dated June from the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the secretariat of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development

Armed violence destroys lives and livelihoods, breeds insecurity, fear and terror, and has a profoundly negative impact on human development. Whether in situations of conflict or crime, it imposes enormous costs on States, communities and individuals.

Armed violence closes schools, empties markets, burdens health services, destroys families, weakens the rule of law, and prevents humanitarian assistance from reaching people in need. Armed violence kills, directly and indirectly, hundreds of thousands of people each year and injures countless more, often with lifelong consequences. It threatens permanently the respect of human rights.

Living free from the threat of armed violence is a basic human need. It is a precondition for human development, dignity and well-being. Providing for the human security of their citizens is a core responsibility of Governments.

In the 2005 World Summit Outcome, global leaders recognized the strong linkage and mutual reinforcement between development, peace, security and human rights. They stressed the right of people to live in dignity, free from fear and from want.

The international community has acknowledged that armed violence and conflict impede realization of the Millennium Development Goals, and that conflict prevention and resolution, violence reduction, human rights, good governance and peacebuilding are key steps towards reducing poverty, promoting economic growth and improving people's lives.

The Peacebuilding Commission, by establishing an institutional link between security and development, will also promote an integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding and play a central role in addressing the problem of armed violence.

Recognizing these realities, we, Ministers and representatives from 42 countries, representing all the world's regions, have gathered in Geneva and have resolved to promote sustainable security and a culture of peace by taking action to reduce armed violence and its negative impact on socio-economic and human development.

We will strengthen our efforts to integrate armed violence reduction and conflict prevention programmes into national, regional and multilateral development frameworks, institutions and strategies, as well as into humanitarian assistance, emergency and crisis management initiatives.

We will work individually and together, at national, regional and multilateral levels, on practical measures that:

- Promote conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation and support post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction;
- Stem the proliferation, illegal trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, and lead to effective weapons reduction, post-conflict disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and small arms control, including control of arms transfers and of illicit brokering;
- Uphold full respect for human rights, promote the peaceful settlement of conflicts based on justice and the rule of law and address a climate of impunity;
- Foster effective and accountable public security institutions;
- Promote a comprehensive approach to armed violence reduction issues, recognizing the different situations, needs and resources of men and women, boys and girls, as reflected in the provisions of United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1612 (2005);
- Ensure that armed violence prevention and reduction initiatives target specific risk factors and groups, and are linked to programmes providing non-violent alternative livelihoods for individuals and communities.

We will take further action to deal effectively both with the supply of and the demand for small arms and light weapons. This includes implementing fully existing instruments, in particular the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and promoting the development of further international instruments, including legally binding ones.

We commit to enhancing the financial, technical and human resources devoted to addressing armed violence issues in a cooperative, comprehensive and coordinated manner, including working, inter alia, to advance this issue within the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and other relevant organizations.

We will support initiatives to measure the human, social and economic costs of armed violence, to assess risks and vulnerabilities, to evaluate the effectiveness of armed violence reduction programmes and to disseminate knowledge of best practices. We will work with affected States and communities and with the donor community, to promote solutions at the local, national, regional and global level.

We will strive to achieve, by 2015, measurable reductions in the global burden of armed violence and tangible improvements in human security worldwide.

We will work in partnership with the development, peace and security-building, public health, humanitarian, human rights and criminal justice communities and, recognizing the important role civil society has to play in reducing armed violence, promote active partnerships between Governments, international organizations and civil society.

We will present this declaration to the upcoming United Nations Conference to review the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

We commit ourselves to pursuing this initiative in all appropriate fora and to meeting again no later than 2008 to assess our progress in achieving these goals.

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Geneva, 7 June 2006